1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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OTHER HANDICRAFTS

283 BARK FIBERS.—From various trees known locally as "mahoe" or "majagua" (M. and S.: *sani*, *wahpi*, *wahmatis*, *tāitu*) the Indians obtain strong bark fiber (M.: *sani;* S.: *wahso*). The best fiber from these trees is pulled off, split, cut into many threads of the desired size and made into ropes and cordage, hammocks (M.: *silmika;* S.: *wah*), matates or carrying bags (M.: *kūa;* T., P.: *wili;* U.: *wali*). These articles are colored with native bark dyes. The carrying bags are of various sizes and consist of coiled work without foundation; they are furnished with a head strap woven of one piece with the bag.

Bast fiber is also the common tying material of the Indians, and a supply thereof may always be found in the huts. It is also used as pack straps, which are put around the forehead and support the load carried on the back.

PITA FIBER.—Pita or silk-grass fiber (M.: *kara;* S.: *awa*) is employed for similar uses as bast fiber, and the articles made from it are practically indestructible. It is also made into fishlines, fish nets, and bowstrings, and used to repair shoes. Its extraction is very laborious. The pulpy covering surrounding the fibers is removed by scraping the surface of the leaf on a flat board with the aid of a machete or heavy iron knife. The fibers, which are thereby exposed, are then loosened and easily pulled from their bed by rubbing them crosswise of the leaf with the leaf pressed down upon the flat board. They are then washed to remove any adhesive pulp, dried, and rolled on the thigh into twine.

285 BASKETRY.—Basketry is not highly developed, although in such a well-watered country as the Mosquito Coast there is no lack of palms, vines, creepers, and epiphytic plants which may be used in basketwork. Certain vines are used in tying material, especially in the construction of the dwellings. The carrying bag of bark fiber or pita fiber takes to a large extent the place of baskets. From *wari* withes is made a round basket (M. and S.: *uslun*, *usnuñ*), which is used to store calabashes and other small kitchen utensils. Other types made by the Sumu are called by these Indians *wah-tāina* and *sidan*. A large waterproof basket, known locally by the name *pataki*, is obtained in trade from the Black Carib; it is made from *siwa* withes.

281 177 LEATHER WORK.—The art of tanning has apparently been learned from the whites. The bark of numerous indigenous trees is used by the Indians for tanning purposes. Leather is used nowadays for drumheads, masquerade dresses, sandals, moccasins, crude saddles, and belts.

●383 RUBBER INDUSTRY.—Some of the Indians have learned the process of hardening the milk of the rubber tree (*Castilla* sp.) by treating

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it with sulphur. They apply a thin coat of the milk on cloth for the making of waterproof traveling bags, hunter's bags, and ponchos or raincoats. This industry is, however, chiefly in the hands of the Ladinos.

WOOD CARVING.—Wooden stools (M.: *sulati;* T., P.: *sini;* U.: *panba*), carved with the machete and the adze from a solid block of wood, are in universal use. In olden times these stools had three well-centered, elaborately decorated legs and a beautiful bird or animal head, reminding much of the metates which are occasionally found in the ancient sites.

Formerly a sort of walking stick or scepter of hard wood, surmounted by a carved human head, was an insignium of office and authority, but this custom has been introduced apparently by the English or Spanish, as there is no native name for it. Similar sticks now belong to the outfit of the Miskito sukya.

The central house post of the old-fashioned Sumu hut was also elaborately carved. The art was also practiced on various wooden domestic implements, as for instance the large wooden spoons (M.: *kustara;* T., P.: *pan-yamna;* U.: *kusaro*) and the cradles (M.: *kuhsañ;* T., P.: *pala;* U.: *lim*). Wood carvings generally represent animal or human heads, or geometric figures, rarely floral designs. At the festivals of the dead celebrated by the Miskito headdresses carved into animal or human heads are sometimes worn.

ENGRAVED CALABASHES.—The common calabashes (M.: *kahmi, kami;* S.: *sutak*) of the Miskito and Sumu are often engraved with simple geometric designs, such as triangles, circles, zigzag lines, parallelograms, which recall those used in tattooing, on pottery vessels and painted tunu cloth, or the ones found on the large river bowlders. According to the Indians, however, these are merely impromptu inventions and serve no other purpose but that of identifying their calabashes. An elaborately carved and painted calabash, obtained from a Sumu chief of Rio Bocay, has been described and depicted by Sapper (f, 206–210).

BEADWORK.—The women of both tribes are very clever in making pretty bead ornaments of various colors to be worn around neck, wrist, below the knee, and above the ankle; the men also occasionally use them as watch fobs and as hatbands. The designs are chiefly animal, especially of snakes. Two patterns of beadwork have been pictured by Sapper (a, 274), one representing paddle handles, the other the skin of the *rikaya* salamander. The Indians utilize small glass beads (M.: *lilyura;* T., P.: *ala;* U.: *tasañka*), which they obtain from the foreign traders. The colors preferred are green, blue, black, and white, while red, brown, and yellow are only sparingly used. Fellechner (137), however, states that the blue beads are not liked by the Miskito and that the red and yellow ones are preferred by